And there came a day, a day unlike any other, when Earth's mightiest heroes found themselves united against a common threat! On that day, the Avengers were born--to fight the foes no single super hero could withstand!

THE NEW AVENGERS

THE COLLECTIVE

PART THREE

Months ago, a devastating confrontation paired the X-Men and the New Avengers against the reality-altering powers of mutant and one-time Avenger Wanda Maximoff, the Scarlet Witch. Afterwards, most of the mutants on earth woke up to find themselves human--without their mutant gene.

Today, a mysterious energy force has hit the planet Earth and has destroyed the small town of North Pole, Alaska. Coming out of the wreckage, a figure of unspeakable power makes its way to the shores of Cleveland after obliterating Alpha Flight, Canada's premier super-team. S.H.I.E.L.D. has no choice but to call in Earth's mightiest heroes.

The Avengers decide to divide into two teams--one to deal with the challenge of discovering the exact nature of the threat and one to take on the physical confrontation. After the powerful being pulls Iron Man's armor apart and briefly returns Ms. Marvel's cosmic powers to her, the Sentry comes to the rescue, taking the entity and the battle out into space.

Meanwhile, the first scientific analyses of the being's powers come in. The energy readings match those of a large number of the depowered mutants...

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Production	Assistant Editors	Editor	Editor in Chief	Publisher
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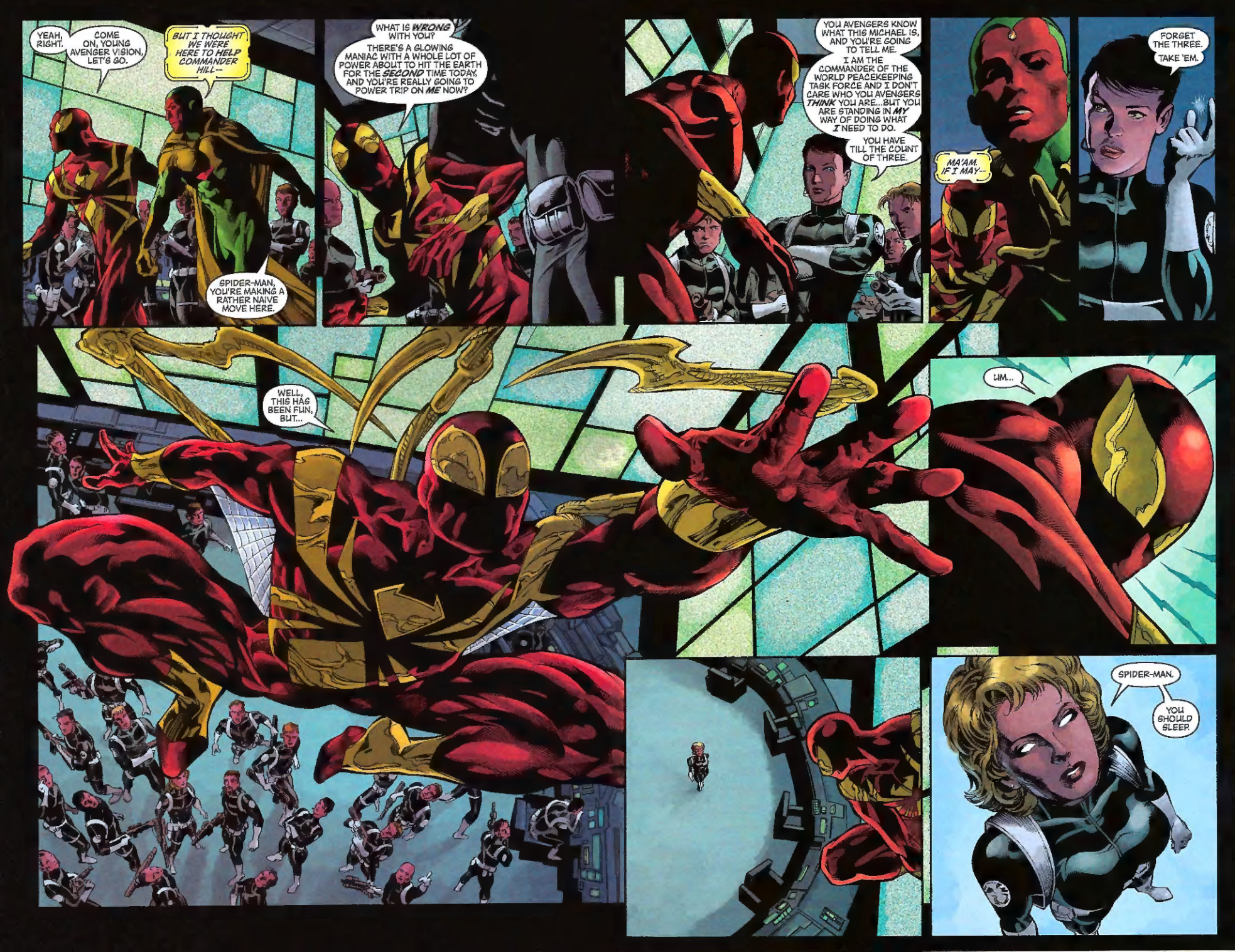
IRON MAN, THIS IS SPIDER-MAN. CAN YOU HEAR ME?
YES, AND I SEE IT.
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
I NEED YOU TO POLITELY EXCUSE YOURSELF FROM THAT ROOM AND LISTEN CAREFULLY.
CAP, PICK UP SPIDEY. HE NEEDS TO NOT BE ON THE S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICARRIER RIGHT NOW.
ON MY WAY.
WE DON'T HAVE TIME.
PETER, IT'S MORE THAN--
THESE NAMES--THE ENERGY SIGNATURES OFF THIS MICHAEL GUY--IS THIS WHAT I THINK IT IS?
PETER, JUST--
MAGNETO, QUICKSILVER... THESE ARE THE HOUSE OF M MUTANTS THAT LOST THEIR MUTANT GENE.
SPIDER-MAN, TAKE THE VISION AND GET OFF THAT SHIP!
I KNOW, BUT IF THESE ENERGY READINGS ARE CORRECT--
WE CAN'T TRUST THAT ROOM! YOU HAVE TO LISTEN TO ME--
I'M ON THE SECURE LINE ON THIS SUIT YOU BUILT ME. NO ONE CAN--
PETER, S.H.I.E.L.D. HAS A PSI-UNIT.
THEY HAVE PSYCHIC AGENTS READING YOUR EVERY THOUGHT. AND--
WHAT IS THE HOUSE OF M?
UH, I HAVE TO GO.
WHAT IS THE HOUSE OF M?
UM...
WHAT?
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST.

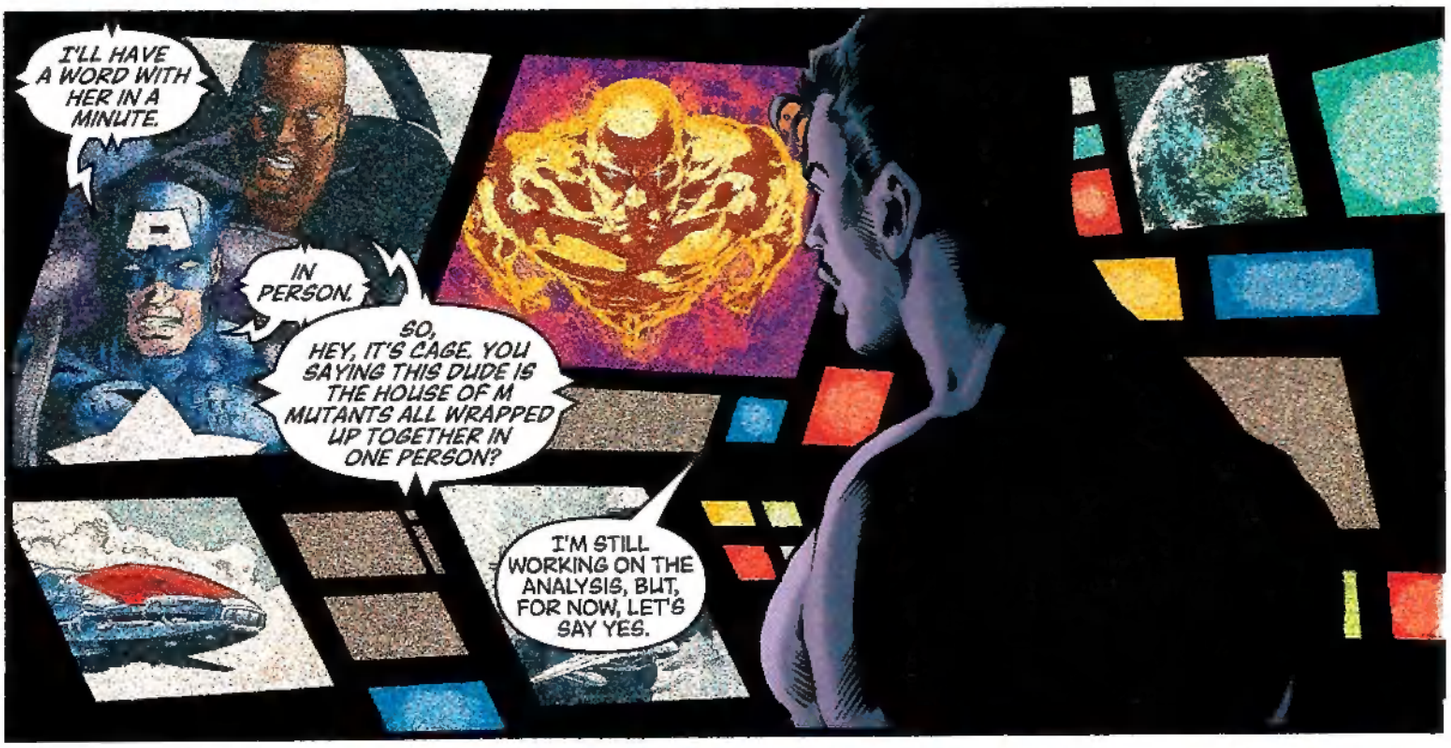
Angel Dust
Armena Ortega
Artie
Beak
Black Tom
Blind Faith
Blob
Boost
Bora
Brass
Chamber
Conquistador
Danielle Moonstar
El Aguila
Fatale
Flambe
Freakshow
Gloom
Hack
Hanna Levy
Harpoon
Hazard
Hub
Hybrid
John Spectre
Jubilee
Caiman
Key
King Bedlam
Kiwi Black
Lara the Illusionist
Lightning Rod
Forearm
Longneck
Magneto
Mary Zero
Agent Zero
Aero
Mesmero
Mist Mistress
Monsoon
Arturo Falcone
Murmur
Nightwind
Overrider
Golden Child
Phantazia
Polaris
Postman
Preview
Prodigy
Quicksilver
Radian
Radius
Reaper
Redneck
Rictor
Scanner
Shatter
Shocker
Shola Inkosi
Skywalker
Slick
Slipstream
Spectre
Spike
Spoilsport
Strobe
Sunfire
Tag
Tantra
Tarot
Tattoo
Tether
Tremolo
Unus
Vague
Wicked
Wildchild
Wildside
Winddancer
Windshear
Wiz Kid
Wraith


YEAH, RIGHT.
COME ON, YOUNG AVENGER VISION, LET'S GO.
BUT I THOUGHT WE WERE HERE TO HELP COMMANDER HILL--
SPIDER-MAN, YOU'RE MAKING A RATHER NAIVE MOVE HERE.
WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU?
THERE'S A GLOWING MANIAC WITH A WHOLE LOT OF POWER ABOUT TO HIT THE EARTH FOR THE SECOND TIME TODAY, AND YOU'RE REALLY GOING TO POWER TRIP ON ME NOW?
YOU AVENGERS KNOW WHAT THIS MICHAEL IS, AND YOU'RE GOING TO TELL ME.
I AM THE COMMANDER OF THE WORLD PEACEKEEPING TASK FORCE AND I DON'T CARE WHO YOU AVENGERS THINK YOU ARE...BUT YOU ARE STANDING IN MY WAY OF DOING WHAT I NEED TO DO.
YOU HAVE TILL THE COUNT OF THREE.
MA'AM, IF I MAY--
FORGET THE THREE. TAKE 'EM.
WELL, THIS HAS BEEN FUN, BUT...
UM...
SPIDER-MAN.
YOU SHOULD SLEEP.

HEADS UP!
WELL DONE, AGENT HOOK.
THAT POOR MAN, HE'S BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH. YOU SHOULD SEE HIS MEMORY CYCLE. IT--
MAYBE LATER. WE'RE KIND OF IN A SITUATION HERE.
TAKE SPIDER-MAN INTO THE BOX AND DIG INTO HIS HEAD AND TAKE WHAT WE NEED.
OH, UH--
WHAT?
YOU'LL NEED TO WAKE HIM UP FOR THAT. HIS UNCONSCIOUS MIND MAKES ITS OWN IMAGERY.
NOW YOU TELL ME.
BUT--BUT--
IS THIS VISION THING SHUT DOWN?
I CUT OFF HIS MODULAR Z-SYSTEM AND HIS AI PONS WITH A--
IS HE DOWN?!
YES.
STRIP HIS DRIVES AND GET ME ALL THE INTEL. ANYTHING HOUSE OF M, ANYTHING THAT LOOKS LIKE ANYTHING.
THEY'RE NOT DRIVES, THEY'RE REALLY A INTRICATE SERIES OF--
JUST--!
YES, MA'AM.
CAPTAIN AMERICA IS GOING TO BE UPSET.
YEAH, WELL... IT'S THE BED THEY MADE.
IS THAT THIS MICHAEL GUY?
YES, MA'AM.
THE SENTRY THREW HIM INTO OUTER SPACE?
YES, MA'AM.
AND IT'S HEADING BACK TOWARDS US?
YES, MA'AM.
GREAT.

CAPTAIN AMERICA?
WE'RE EN ROUTE.
WE GOT TROUBLE.
ON TOP OF THE GLOWING GENTLEMEN WITH THE--?
OH, YES.

I JUST LOST CONTACT WITH SPIDER-MAN AND THE VISION.
FROM THE S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICARRIER?
THAT WOULD BE YES.
ARE YOU SAYING MARIA HILL BLOCKED YOUR--?
YES.
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THAT WOMAN?
SHE THINKS WE'RE HOLDING OUT ON HER.
I WONDER WHY.


I'LL HAVE A WORD WITH HER IN A MINUTE.
IN PERSON.
SO, HEY, IT'S CAGE. YOU SAYING THIS DUDE IS THE HOUSE OF M MUTANTS ALL WRAPPED UP TOGETHER IN ONE PERSON?
I'M STILL WORKING ON THE ANALYSIS, BUT, FOR NOW, LET'S SAY YES.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS NOW? DO YOU SEE THE SENTRY?
I HAVE HIM.
HE'S HEADING RIGHT FOR ME.

TONY, THIS IS CAROL. GET OUT OF THERE!
HE RIPPED YOUR ARMOR RIGHT OFF OF YOU THE LAST TIME, HE'LL--
THAT'S BECAUSE I WASN'T READY FOR HIM LAST TIME.
AND HERE WE GO...
TONY!

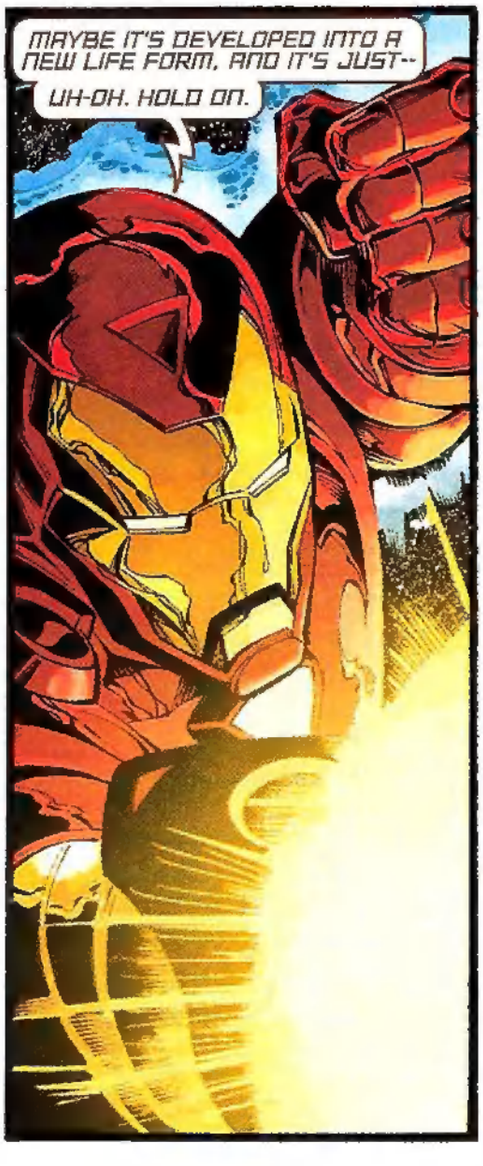
ZERO POINT ENERGY.
AVENGERS, I'M OKAY.
I WAS ABLE TO DECONSTRUCT THE PRIMARY ENERGY FIELDS HE'S USING BASED ON OLD FILES OF MAGNETO AND COMPANY AND PROCESS AN ENERGY FIELD THAT CAN COUNTERACT IT.
DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES THAT WILL WORK BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE ALL THE DATA.
AND I DON'T KNOW HOW THE ENERGY FIELDS HE POSSESSES ARE AFFECTING EACH OTHER.
I'M TELLING YOU THIS AS FAST AS I CAN SO YOU CAN USE THE DATA IN CASE SOMETHING HAPPENS...
...TO ME...
UH-OH.
TONY?!

SENTRY'S BACK.
WHEW.
ALL THE HOUSE OF M MUTANTS' POWERS IN ONE PERSON?
HE SAID ENERGY FIELDS.
THE DIFFERENCE BEING...?
CERTAIN MUTANTS CONTROLLED CERTAIN KINDS OF ENERGIES--
--SOME OF WHICH WE DON'T EVEN ACKNOWLEDGE IN MODERN SCIENCE YET.
AND THERE MAY HAVE BEEN NEW ENERGIES CREATED WHICH WEREN'T EVEN CATALOGUED.
WHEN THE SCARLET WITCH UNNATURALLY ENDED THE MUTANT GENE IN A MILLION-PLUS MUTANTS, OR HOWEVER MANY IT WAS, ALL THAT ENERGY HAD NOWHERE TO GO.
WHAT IF, LET'S SAY, MICHAEL WAS--WHOA--
--LET'S SAY MICHAEL WAS AN ENERGY-ABSORBING MUTANT LIVING A QUIET LIFE IN THE WILDS OF ALASKA, AND HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE WAS A MUTANT--
HOLD ON.

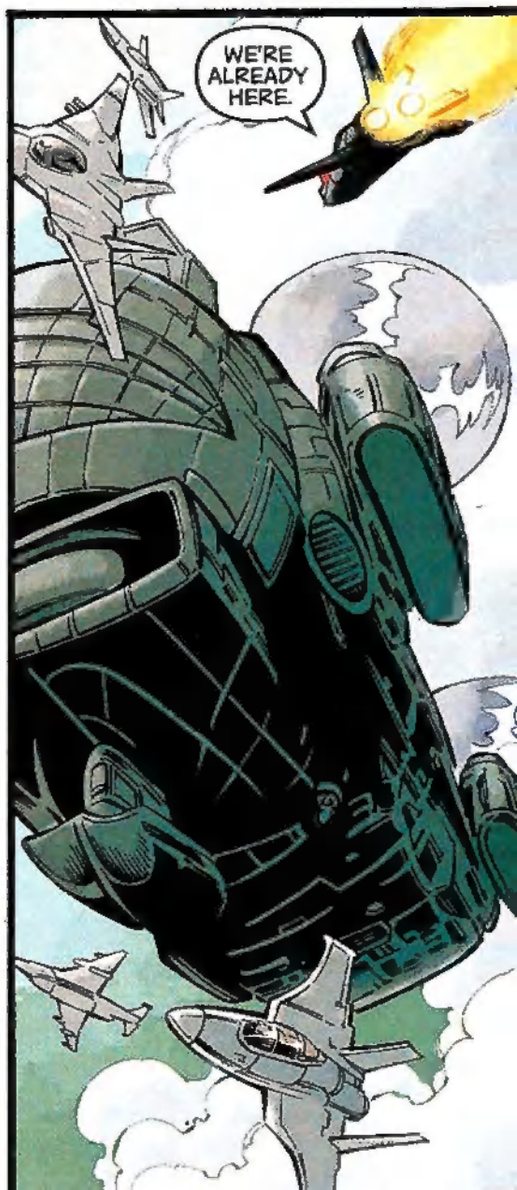
OR MAYBE, AND THIS IS A MAYBE, THE ENERGIES COMBINED TOGETHER INTO SOMETHING COMPLETELY NEW.
A COLLECTIVE OF ENERGIES THAT DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE ELSE TO GO.
AND MAYBE THE ENERGY JUST CRASHED ONTO THIS POOR GUY RANDOMLY.

OR MAYBE ONE OR SOME OF THE ENERGY FIELDS WERE SENTIENT--
--AND NOW, WITHOUT A HOST FORM, THEY HAVE TAKEN CONTROL OF ALL THE OTHER SOURCES OF ENERGY AND ARE USING--
SENTIENT LIKE ALIVE?
JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER.

IT'S A POSSIBILITY.
OR MAYBE THE COLLECTIVE BECAME SENTIENT WHEN IT MERGED.


MAYBE IT'S DEVELOPED INTO A NEW LIFE FORM, AND IT'S JUST--
UH-OH. HOLD ON.

ARRRGH!
TONY!
OH, MAN.
LET'S GO GET HIM.
NO!


WE'RE ALREADY HERE.

NYAGH!

SORRY ABOUT THAT, MR. PARKER.
ONE OF MY AGENTS PUT THAT IMAGE IN YOUR HEAD.

WE NEEDED TO WAKE YOU UP, AND WE DON'T HAVE TIME FOR SUBTLETY.
SO...

HOUSE.
OF.
M.

WHERE IS SPIDER-MAN?! WHERE IS THE VISION?!

LADY, SERIOUSLY, YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR MIND.
YOU DO REALIZE THAT WHEN THE SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT IS PASSED, YOU'LL PROBABLY ALL BE WORKING FOR ME?

CAP, C'MON, YOU HAVE TO RESPECT HER AUTHORITY HERE. SHE'S IN CHARGE.
DUM DUM, WHERE ARE MY TEAMMATES? WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?
SORRY, BUDDY. IT'S HER CALL. SHE'S IN CHARGE.
AGENT DUGAN, I'M AN AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. I HAVE FULL HELICARRIER CLEARANCE.
YEAH, WELL, Y'ALL NEED TO CALM DOWN AND LET HER--
LET HER DO WHAT?

LADY, THERE'S A BIG GLOWING GUY KILLING THINGS... RIGHT NOW!
NOT LATER, NOW.
HOUSE. OF. M.

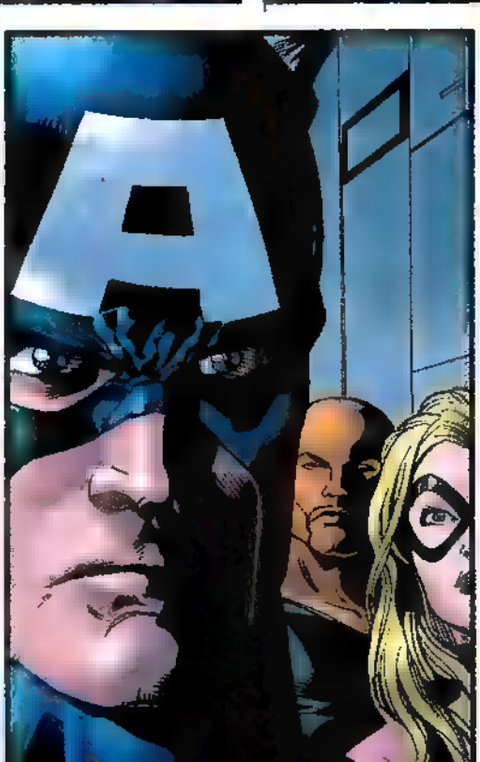
I KNOW IT'S HARD TO SEE IT RIGHT NOW, BUT SHE HAS THE BEST INTENTIONS IN THE--
AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

BOOM

THIS IS COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE, HILL!
(I WAS JUST THINKING THE SAME THING.)
NOW I'M [redacted] TO HAVE [redacted] JOB!

BRIDGE--HAVE THE COMMAND HEADS FROM ALL TECH FIELDS READY IN THE BRIEFING ROOM.
WHEN THE PRESIDENT HEARS WHAT YOU JUST DID--

HERE. CALL HIM.
HE'S WAITING TO HEAR FROM ME ANYHOW.
MAYBE HE CAN TAKE A MINUTE AWAY FROM DRAFTING THE REGISTRATION ACT TO TAKE YOUR CALL...


A

WE'RE IN CRISIS MODE, SO HELP OR DON'T.
BRIDGE--HAS THIS MICHAEL TOUCHED EARTH YET?
NO? GOOD.
SEE, CAPTAIN...

"... SOME OF THE AVENGERS KNOW WHERE THEY'RE NEEDED."
THIS IS TONY STARK.
I'M OKAY. ISH.
ANY AVENGERS ON LINE?
I AM.
WE'RE ALL HERE. WE'RE HEADING TO THE QUINJET.
WHERE'S SPIDER-MAN?
I'M RIGHT HERE.
WHAT HAPPENED?
WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT LATER.
I BELIEVE MY DRIVES WERE HACKED.
THEY TOOK THE INFO.
YES.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. IT'S MY FAULT FOR SENDING YOU THERE.
I HAD NO IDEA IT WAS GOING TO GO THIS WAY.
SOME FUTURIST.
MS. HILL, WHAT HAVE YOUR PEOPLE PUT TOGETHER FROM THE HOUSE OF M ANALYSIS?
OH, NOW YOU WANT OUR ANALYSIS?
NO, NOW WE'RE DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM AT HAND.
WE'RE RUNNING ANALYSES RIGHT NOW. HOW ARE YOU HOLDING OUT UP THERE? CAN YOU SHOW US A VISUAL?
THAT WOULD HELP.
THE FIGHT IS ONLY LASTING THIS LONG BECAUSE MICHAEL HAS NO EXPERIENCE WITH HIS POWERS.
HE'S LASHING OUT BLINDLY AND I DON'T THINK HE EVEN KNOWS HE'S DOING IT.
I THINK THIS IS POWER NO ONE MAN COULD WIELD, ESPECIALLY WITH ONLY AN HOUR'S EXPERIENCE.
SENTRY IS JUST TRYING TO KEEP HIM OFF EARTH, SO IF YOU GUYS HAVE ANY MEDALS LYING AROUND, HE EARNED ONE.
WHERE IS HE TRYING TO GO?
AND WHAT DOES HE WANT?

I'LL BE SURE AND ASK HIM AS SOON AS I GET HIM SOMEWHERE WHERE YOU CAN, YOU KNOW, HEAR SOUND.
STOP IT! STOP ENGAGING HIM IN PHYSICAL CONTACT!!
BECAUSE?
HELLO?! YOU CAN'T STOP HIM, SO STOP TRYING!!
ALL YOU ARE DOING IS--EVERY TIME YOU PUT HIM IN A NEW SITUATION HIS POWERS FIND A WAY TO ADAPT TO IT.
HE WAS WALKING UNTIL YOU THREW HIM INTO THE AIR, THEN HE FIGURED OUT HE COULD FLY.
WE HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF REASONING WITH HIM OR CONTAINING HIM IF WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHERE HE'S TRYING TO GO AND WHAT HE'S TRYING TO DO.
WHAT IF HE'S TRYING TO BLOW UP THE WHITE HOUSE?
WHY WOULD HE DO THAT?
WHAT IF HE'S TAKING US TO WANDA MAXIMOFF?

HE'S EN ROUTE.

HE'S BACK IN EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE. AND HE'S MOVING FAST.

WE'RE FOLLOWING!

LOCK HIS DESTINATION TARGET!

DAMN, HE'S MOVING!

MR. PRESIDENT, HE'S HEADING BACK TOWARDS--

TONY?

I'M REDIRECTING THE QUINJET DIRECTLY TO HIM.

WHOA!

WHERE?

FINAL COORDINATES ARE COMING IN NOW.

UH-OH.

HE'S FLYING DIRECTLY FOR IT.

OH MY GOD...

WHERE ARE WE?

OH NO...

FABOOM

GENOSHA.

TO BE CONTINUED...

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

Okay, so, remember last month when I, Avengers writer Brian Bendis, went on and on about how great the Internet was for the comics community, and you were all like, duh?

Well, over at newsarama.com, Matt Brady presented a readers' Q and A with me on the NEW AVENGERS: ILLUMINATI Special's publication.

Here is a condensed version of that Q and A. (For the whole interview, go to http://www.newsarama.com/forums/showthread.php?threadid=66106)

Q: Why build the Illuminati in Marvel's past, instead of building it as a direct response to recent events?

BB: When the idea came to me, the second thought I had was, well, why wouldn't they have done this in the past? After Galactus or the Kree/Skrull War or the original Secret War. Once that thought came, a little research brought the Kree/Skrull War to the obvious forefront. It just fit without retconning anything.

Q: How many times do you suppose the Illuminati have met?

BB: Not as many times as you would guess and not about the things you would guess. Again, those stories will probably still be told, so I don't want to give it away right now.

Q: In SHE-HULK #4 just 2 months ago, it was revealed that the Hulk has NEVER killed a civilian. So why are Tony Stark and S.H.I.E.L.D. saying that the Hulk has killed and continues to kill civilians? I don't get it. Is the Hulk a murderer or not?

BB: Remember in the Hulk movie when the Hulk threw a tank with a guy inside it across the desert and it crashes and the guy gets out of the tank unscathed? Didn't that seem like complete and utter **** to you? It did to me. I'm not saying the Hulk is a squeezing-a-guy's-head-until-his-eyeballs-pop-out murderer, but when Hulk smashes, **** gets ****ed up and people get hurt. You can't knock down a building and everyone inside brushes off and goes to lunch. It's ridiculous.

Q: You have men of science, monarchs and a mystic present as members, why not include a member of the Marvel Universe god pantheons? Basically, why wasn't Thor or Ikaris of the Eternals included?

BB: Thor would have been interesting, but he is often not on Earth and just wasn't there for the original meeting. The Eternals I backed off on for a couple of reasons: firstly, I wasn't sure where [Neil] Gaiman was going with his interpretation and thought it best to respectfully let him do his thing. Also, the Eternals haven't really been in the mainstream consciousness in the last couple of decades and trying to explain them in this context would have been a real headache.

Q: In AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, Stark responds to how much super hero rumbles have cost in damages with "47" (from memory): the number of times the heroes have prevented Earth/the U.S. from being destroyed or conquered. Shouldn't the same argument have been made about the Hulk?

BB: One could argue that's why they tried to find him a peaceful place to call home and not shoot him into the Sun.

Q: As a person who has been behind many major events at Marvel, how does it feel to know that while Illuminati kicks off the event, another writer (Millar) will be tackling the event?

BB: I enjoyed it quite a bit. Mark is the real deal, and I think CIVIL WAR is the best thing he has ever written. I got to express these ideas here, and then you can spend the summer yelling at him instead of me.

Q: Did the Illuminati have any say/opinion on the recent outing of Matt Murdock? At one of the earliest points in the trial, Reed Richards tries to testify on Matt's behalf. Was that Illuminati-motivated or what? Did the Ill Boyz ever discuss this?

BB: If you remember in issue #56 of DAREDEVIL, some of the Illuminati came to Matt and expressed their feelings. Matt didn't care for it.

Q: How did you decide who would take what position on the Registration Act? Did the characters just write themselves? Or did you decide a certain number would be for it, a certain number against, and then figure out who made sense to go which way?

BB: Some characters just write themselves, while others surprise you. But it's not up to me or Millar alone how this all goes down. Many, many people get together and discuss and vote on this stuff. No one person has total say, which I think is the way big things like this should go.

Q: The succeeding times the Illuminati gather, they are shown meeting in surroundings that are abandoned and dilapidated, one of which (the Hydrobase) looks like it's on the verge of collapsing. Was this meant to reflect the psychological health of the Illuminati at the time of these happenings and the team disintegration that was occurring around them?

BB: Yes. Nicely put. I also think it added a lot of history to the scenes that people who know the history will appreciate it while those who don't will not be bogged down or confused.

Q: How can Iron Man sit in a chair? I mean, he must weigh a ton.

BB: That's funny.

See you next month to discuss some genuinely shocking Avengers news!

ON SALE MAY 2006

ANNIHILATION: NOVA #2: Can Drax teach Nova to control his new powers?

ANNIHILATION: RONAN #2: Up against Gamora, the Deadliest Woman in the Universe!

ANNIHILATION: SILVER SURFER #2: The ex-heralds of Galactus take a stand against the Annihilation Wave!

ANNIHILATION: SUPER-SKRULL #2: The Super-Skrull's quest takes him behind enemy lines!

CAPTAIN AMERICA #18: The Twenty-First Century Blitz begins!

CIVIL WAR #1: Whose side are you on?

FANTASTIC FOUR - A DEATH IN THE FAMILY: Sue Storm is dead, and the Human Torch will do the impossible to get his sister back again.

FANTASTIC FOUR: FIRST FAMILY #3: The FF go public for the first time!

IRON MAN #8: The New Avengers! Graviton! And a mysterious armored assassin!

IRON MAN: INEVITABLE #6: The final showdown between Iron Man and Spymaster!

LAST PLANET STANDING #1: Could it be the end of the Universe as we know it?

LAST PLANET STANDING #2: Galactus targets Asgard as Earth's heroes prepare to make their last stand.

MARVEL TEAM-UP #20: Captain America battles A.I.M. while a new hero gets his start!

MS. MARVEL #3: Ms. Marvel faces a deadly new foe from beyond the stars.

NEW AVENGERS #19: As the New Avengers battle the Collective, S.H.I.E.L.D. arrests Spider-Man!

SHE-HULK #8: She-Hulk must decide with whom she stands. A CIVIL WAR tie-in.

SON OF M #6: Quicksilver reaches the end of the line?

SPIDER-GIRL #98: Spider-Girl is back in black as the Hobgoblin attacks her closest allies.

SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED #15: Klaus Janson! And the Lizard!

THE THING #7: Ben takes Alicia on a trip to ancient Greece. What could possibly go wrong?

THUNDERBOLTS #102: Joystick vs. Speed Demon!

X-FACTOR #7: Siryn receives a final gift from her deceased father, Banshee!

X-MEN: THE END - MEN AND X-MEN #5: The return of Jean Grey?

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